

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 02694 01 OF 02 190342Z
ACTION PM-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 L-03 ACDA-12
NSAE-00 PA-02 SS-15 SP-02 USIA-15 TRSE-00 NSC-05
OMB-01 DOE-11 SOE-02 EPA-04 /100 W
-----100042 190350Z /65

R 161810Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3238
SECDEF WASHDC
INFO USMISSION USNATO
CINCUSAFE
USCINCEUR
USNMR SHAPE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 02694

DEFENSE FOR OASD/ISA: OASD/PA AND CSAF/01

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (O M I S S I O N S T E X T B O T H S E C T I O N S)

E.O. 11652:N/A
TAGS: UK, NATO, MPOL, MILI
SUBJECT: RAF GREENHAM COMMON

REF: A) USCINCEUR DTG 100955Z; B) STATE 39678;
C) LONDON 2499

MCNAIR-WILSON'S OFFICE HAS NOW PROVIDED POL-MIL ATTACHE
WITH FULL TEXT OF THE STATEMENT MADE AT HIS 8 FEBRUARY
PRESS CONFERENCE WHICH WE QUOTE IN FULL:
"I RECEIVED A LETTER FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY UNDER
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE FOR THE ROYAL AIR FORCE
ON MONDAY 6 FEBRUARY, INFORMING ME THAT THE GOVERNMENT
HAD RECEIVED A FORMAL APPLICATION FROM THE U.S.
AUTHORITIES TO RE-OPEN R.A.F. GREENHAM COMMON AS A
FULLY OPERATIONAL AIR BASE. IF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
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PAGE 02 LONDON 02694 01 OF 02 190342Z

AGREES IT WILL BE THE AMERICAN INTENTION TO OPERATE
FIFTEEN KC-135 TANKER AIRCRAFT FROM THE BASE. THESE
AIRCRAFT ARE SIMILAR TO BOEING 707 FOUR-JET CIVIL
AIRCRAFT.

THE AMERICANS' INTENTION TO ASK TO RE-OPEN THE BASE
WAS FIRST MOOTED TO ME IN A PRIVATE CONVERSATION AT THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS ON 26 APRIL 1977 BY THE THEN

COMMANDER OF THE THIRD UNITED STATES AIR FORCE. HE ASKED ME TO TREAT OUR CONVERSATION IN CONFIDENCE UNTIL A FORMAL APPLICATION HAD BEEN MADE. NOW THAT THE APPLICATION HAS BEEN MADE I CONSIDER MYSELF FREE TO MAKE KNOWN THE FACTS AS HE TOLD THEM.

HE SAID THAT AS A RESULT OF THE CHANGED THREAT TO THE NATO ALLIANCE, THE UNITED STATES HAD REAPPRAISED ITS DEFENCE POLICY IN EUROPE AND HAD COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT IT NEEDED ANOTHER AIR BASE IN ENGLAND.

THEY WOULD USE THE BASE FOR TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT AND INTENDED TO OPERATE KC-135 TANKER AIRCRAFT AND C-130 HERCULES TRANSPORTS. INITIALLY THEY WOULD START WITH SIX TO EIGHT AIRCRAFT AND 5 TO 10 TAKE-OFFS DAILY. IN 8 TO 18 MONTHS THEY WOULD BUILD UP TO 15 TO 20 AIRCRAFT WITH 10 TO 14 TAKE OFFS EVERY DAY. THERE WOULD BE FLYING EVERY DAY IN THE WEEK, INCLUDING SUNDAY, AND THERE WOULD BE NIGHT FLYING AT ALL HOURS OF THE NIGHT.

INITIALLY THE AIR CREWS INVOLVED WOULD NOT BE ACCOMPANIED BY THEIR FAMILIES AND WOULD BE LIVING ON THE BASE.

HE SAID THAT GREENHAM WAS PARTICULARLY ATTRACTIVE TO THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE BECAUSE OF ITS 10,000' RUNWAY AND BECAUSE IT WOULD BE CHEAPER TO DEVELOP THAN ANY OF THE ALTERNATIVES. THE AMERICANS WERE PREPARED TO INVEST HEAVILY IN THE BASE. THERE WOULD BE AN ACTUAL INVESTMENT OF \$40 MILLION AT THE OUTSET AND AN UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 03 LONDON 02694 01 OF 02 190342Z

ANNUAL EXPENDITURE OF \$1.8 MILLION. IMPROVEMENTS WOULD BE MADE TO THE BARRACKS AND A THEATRE WOULD BE PROVIDED. ALL WORK WOULD BE CARRIED OUT BY THE PROPERTY SERVICES AGENCY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT. ABOUT 250 PERSONS WOULD BE RECRUITED LOCALLY TO WORK ON THE BASE. BECAUSE OF THE TRANSPORT NATURE OF THE BASE, THERE WOULD BE SOME INCREASE IN ROAD TRAFFIC TO AND FROM IT.

THE COMMANDER SAID THAT THOUGHT WOULD BE GIVEN TO IMPLEMENTING CONTROL PROCEDURES TO LIMIT THE NOISE PROBLEM OF THE AIRCRAFT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

MANY RUMOURS HAVE CIRCULATED IN WEST BERKSHIRE SINCE UNITED STATES F111 STRIKE AIRCRAFT WERE STATIONED AT GREENHAM IN THE SUMMER OF 1976, FOLLOWED A FEW WEEKS LATER BY A NUMBER OF UNITED STATES C-130 TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT WHICH LEFT THE BASE IN THE EARLY AUTUMN OF 1976. AS A RESULT OF THE MANY PROTESTS I RECEIVED, PRINCIPALLY ABOUT NOISE NUISANCE, I HAVE SOUGHT ASSURANCES FROM THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE ABOUT THE FUTURE USE OF THE BASE.

ON 16 DECEMBER 1976 THE PRESENT UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE FOR THE R.A.F. WROTE:-

'...THERE IS NO INTENTION TO ALTER THE STANDBY
STATUS OF R.A.F. GREENHAM COMMON AND CONSEQUENTLY,
OF COURSE, NO PLANS TO STATION ANY AIRCRAFT THERE

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PAGE 01 LONDON 02694 02 OF 02 190343Z
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UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 02694

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (OMISSIONS THROUGHOUT TEXT)

PERMANENTLY.'

HOWEVER, AFTER MY CONVERSATION WITH THE AMERICAN
COMMANDER OF THE 3RD U.S. AIR FORCE, I SOUGHT A MEETING
WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE, THE RT. HON.
FREDERICK MULLEY, M.P., AND THIS TOOK PLACE ON 26 MAY
1977. AT THE MEETING, WHICH WAS ATTENDED BY THE UNDER
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE FOR THE R.A.F., I ASKED
IF THE U. S. AUTHORITIES HAD SUBMITTED A FORMAL
APPLICATION TO USE R.A.F. GREENHAM. I WAS TOLD THEY
HAD NOT, BUT IF THEY DID I WOULD BE INFORMED OF THEIR
ACTION. HENCE THE LETTER I RECEIVED ON MONDAY. THE
SECRETARY OF STATE TOLD ME HE WAS ALREADY AWARE OF THE
AMERICANS' INTENTIONS FOR GREENHAM. AT THE MEETING
I MADE A NUMBER OF POINTS ABOUT WHY I THOUGHT GREENHAM
WAS UNSUITABLE AS A FULLY OPERATIONAL AIR BASE OUTSIDE
AN EMERGENCY OR WARTIME SITUATION. SUMMARISED MY
OBJECTIONS WERE AS FOLLOWS:-

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PAGE 02 LONDON 02694 02 OF 02 190343Z

1. R.A.F. GREENHAM IS SURROUNDED BY A HIGHLY POPULATED AREA; NEWBURY, THATCHAM, BRIMPTON, ALDERMASTON, TADLEY, HEADLEY AND NEWTOWN - A POPULATION OF AT LEAST 50,000.
2. NEW BUILDING PLANS AT THATCHAM AND ELSEWHERE COULD INCREASE THAT TOTAL BY UP TO 4,000 PEOPLE.
3. THERE WERE A LARGE NUMBER OF SCHOOLS CLOSE TO THE BASE AS WELL AS HOSPITALS IN SANDLEFORD AND NEWBURY.
4. AIRCRAFT NOISE WOULD CAUSE A MAJOR INTERFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF MOST OF THESE PEOPLE AND THE POSSIBILITY OF AN AIRCRAFT CRASHING INTO SUCH A POPULATED AREA COULD NOT BE RULED OUT OR BE ANYTHING BUT A MATTER OF GREAT CONCERN.
5. THE ATOMIC WEAPONS RESEARCH ESTABLISHMENT IS ONLY A HANDFUL OF MILES FROM THE END OF THE RUNWAY. THE HAZARD WHICH MUST EXIST THAT AN AIRCRAFT COULD CRASH INTO THE ESTABLISHMENT IS TERRIFYING TO CONTEMPLATE.

THE MINISTER AGREED TO CONSIDER MY REPRESENTATIONS.

AFTER CAREFUL CONSIDERATION I AM STILL OF THE VIEW THAT IF AN ALTERNATIVE SITE CAN BE FOUND FOR THE AMERICAN AIR FORCE THE MINISTRY SHOULD SEEK IT.

I RECOGNISE THE UNITED STATES AUTHORITIES' DUTY TO MAINTAIN THEIR FORCES IN NATO AT WHATEVER STRENGTH THEY THINK RIGHT AND THAT SIGNATORIES TO THE TREATY MUST PROVIDE THE NECESSARY FACILITIES. HOWEVER, ON THE BALANCE OF THE ARGUMENT I CONSIDER THAT GREENHAM HAS SPECIAL PROBLEMS TIED UP WITH ITS POSITION IN A HIGHLY POPULATED PART OF SOUTHERN ENGLAND AND THAT THESE OUT-WEIGH, AT LEAST TO MY MIND, THE ADVANTAGES IN JOBS AND MONEY WHICH THE RE-OPENING OF THE BASE COULD PROVIDE. HOWEVER, I AM ANXIOUS TO OBTAIN THE VIEWS OF MY CON-

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PAGE 03 LONDON 02694 02 OF 02 190343Z

STITUENTS AND I SHALL WELCOME ANY REPRESENTATIONS THEY MAY LIKE TO MAKE TO ME."

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